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The genus *Agapornis* in East Africa

The genus *Agapornis* (lovebirds) is confined to the Afrotropical region, with five of the nine species occurring in East Africa, including two species endemic to Tanzania.

The noticeable increase of feral birds in many urban and suburban areas is now posing serious threats to other hole-nesting species, while the trapping and export of many thousands of lovebirds continues on a vast scale in Tanzania, with commercial airlines carrying consignment after consignment of these and other birds for the pet shops in Europe and North America.

Over the past forty years, lovebirds have become extremely popular cage birds and are now a familiar sight in pet shops throughout the world; as a result, this lucrative trade has become, together with habitat destruction, a major threat to the survival of many species.

With such conditions prevailing, it seems appropriate at this time to review the current status of all *Agapornis* species occurring in East Africa.

Fischer's Lovebird *Agapornis fischeri*

Endemic to Tanzania, occurring as a locally common resident in wooded grasslands to the south and east of Lake Victoria, with its range centred around the Serengeti National Park. Other populations occur south to Nzega and Singida and east to Babati and Lake Manyara with wanderers reported near Arusha. It overlaps with *A. personata* in an area immediately south of Lake Manyara to Babati, though no interbreeding has been reported. There is no evidence that it has ever occurred in the wild in Kenya.

Yellow-collared Lovebird *Agapornis personata*

Endemic to Tanzania, occurring as a locally common resident in *Acacia* thorn scrub, being particularly partial to areas with scattered baobab trees. It ranges from Arusha and Tarangire National Park south through Dodoma and central areas to Ruaha National Park and the Lake Rukwa area, overlapping with the preceding species around the southern end of Lake Manyara, and Babati.

Despite a pre-1920 sight record from Taveta on the Kenya–Tanzania border, there is no evidence that it has ever occurred in a purely wild state in Kenya.

Feral and hybrid lovebirds

With the trapping and export of lovebirds from Tanzania dating back to the 1920s (Moreau 1945), and the subsequent release and escape of many in coastal cities, feral populations of both Fischer's and Yellow-collared Lovebirds have been present in Dar es Salaam, Tanga, and Mombasa for over fifty years. In addition, over the past 15–20 years many aviary owners in both Kenya and Tanzania faced with an ever increasing hybrid population of Fischer's x Yellow-collared Lovebirds (which hybridize freely in captivity) have frequently released many hundreds into the wild. Thompson (1989) estimated the hybrid lovebird population in the Lake Naivasha area of central Kenya alone to be more than 6000 by 1986, while several other hybrid populations have also been released in other areas of Kenya (Cunningham-van Someren 1975). This has resulted in flocks of highly variable hybrid birds occurring in many areas, particularly around Kisumu, Molo, Nakuru, Naivasha, Nairobi, and Athi River, with wanderers occurring north to Isiolo, Meru and Embu districts, and south to Lolgorien and Namanga.

Red-faced Lovebird *Agapornis pullaria*

The race *ugandae* is a locally common species occurring in and around forest edges, wooded grasslands and areas of cultivation. It occurs rather sporadically over many areas of western, central and southern Uganda, northwestern Tanzania (south to Kigoma), and extending east along the southern shore of Lake Victoria to Kome and Ukerewe islands.

In Kenya it is a local resident in the extreme western border areas from Malaba and Malikisi south to Alupe and Busia and extending east to Mungatsi in Mumias district.

Black-collared Lovebird *Agapornis swinderniana*

The race *emini* is a rarely recorded lowland forest species particularly favouring fig trees and edges of cultivation in the Bwamba lowlands of western Uganda.

Grey-headed Lovebird *Agapornis cana*

This Madagascar endemic was reported to have been introduced to Zanzibar and Mafia Islands, with some early sight records reported from Zanzibar (Pakenham 1979). However, with no evidence of its occurrence there since 1920, on the recommendation of Baker (1990) this species has now been deleted from the East African and Tanzania lists.

Lilian's Lovebird *Agapornis lilianae*

Moreau (1945) mentioned reports of this species from western parts of Rufiji district and from around Liwale during the early 1940s. Forshaw (1973) also gave its range as including the southernmost parts of Tanzania and northwestern Mozambique; this was reiterated by Clancey (1980), possibly following Forshaw (*op. cit.*). Recent records are provided by Davies (1991) and Baker (1991).

Although not admitted to the East African list by Britton (1980), the records of Davies and Baker (*op. cit.*) justify the inclusion of the species in the Tanzanian avifauna.

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First East African Nest Record for the Bar-tailed Trogon *Apaloderma vittatum*

On 16 March, 1990, a Bar-tailed Trogon *Apaloderma vittatum* nest was located at 1554 m in the Impenetrable (Bwindi) Forest of southwestern Uganda (0° 53'S - 1° 8'S and 29° 35'E - 29° 50'E). Apparently, this is the first East African nest and egg record for this species (Brown & Britton 1980, Fry *et al.* 1988). The Bar-tailed Trogon is a little-known species inhabiting mountain forests. Its populations are disjunct, although found as far west as Bioko Island, and as far south as Zambia (Fry *et al.* 1988).

The March nesting date for Uganda agrees with February-March laying records from Zaire (Prigogine 1953). These records coincide with the rainy season. Breeding records elsewhere are scattered across many months (Prigogine 1953, Stuart 1986, Fry *et al.* 1988). It is, therefore, not clear what factors influence the onset of breeding.

We found the nest when a female Bar-tailed Trogon flew from the tree cavity as we passed under it. Located on a little-used footpath in a valley, the nest tree (*Memecylon* sp.) was 3 m from a stream. Three kilometres inside the Forest Reserve boundary, the nest site was on a small peninsula (15 m across), formed by a 4.7-m wide stream. The nest was heavily shaded by tall trees and surrounding hills. The environment was damp, dark and dominated by mosses, lianas, epiphytes and tree ferns (*Cyathea deckenii*). Middle story trees were sparsely spaced. The herbaceous understory provided dense ground cover to a height of 1.3 m.

The nest hole faced northwest. It was 1.9 m above ground in a slightly leaning trunk. The nest tree circumference was approximately 1 m. Its knobbly trunk was covered with a thick layer of moss and epiphytes. Approximately 90 per cent of the nest tree was dead wood. It was hollow from 60 cm above ground to just below the nest floor. Dimensions of the entrance hole were 17 x 8 cm. The floor of the cavity was covered with wood chips and sawdust. The nest was clean, and contained no faeces. Cavity dimensions were 21 cm (from inside lip of entrance hole to back wall) x 17 cm. The floor of the nest gradually sloped away from the entrance hole (with which it was nearly level) to a depth of 3.5 cm against the back wall. These cavity dimensions are considerably different from those recorded in West Africa (c. 40 cm diameter x 20 cm deep) (Prigogine 1953).

Two eggs rested in a small depression, 2 cm from the back wall. They were smooth, white and thin-shelled. The eggs were rounded ovals, slightly pointed on the narrow end. Their